

THE MAYOR'S GREEN BUILDING TASKFORCE

October 16th, 2003 - Task Force Meeting

CASE STUDY – AUSTIN, TEXAS

The Austin Green Building Program is the oldest of these three case studies. It was originally organized in a previous version by a non-profit organization (Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems), and is currently administered by Austin Energy (an Austin public utility). Its scope includes residential, commercial, multifamily and municipal properties.

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History:

The Austin Green Building Program was initiated in 1991, evolving from the Austin EnergyStar Program created in 1985. Its early focus was on residential building and expanded in 1993 to include commercial construction and Municipal Guidelines for city buildings. The program has recently begun to focus on multifamily construction.

Structure:

The program is run by Austin Energy, the city's public electric utility. Most of the funding is provided by Austin Energy and is supplemented by the city's water utility, environmental, and solid waste departments. The Program has a staff of 14 with expertise in green building.

Membership:

The program has approximately 90 members representing various building industry sectors. A standard membership is available for builders and architects, and an associate membership is available for manufacturers, suppliers, and real estate agents. Membership is free, but new members are required to be working on a project in the Austin Energy service area at the time they join, attend a "Green Building Basics" course within one year of joining, and attend two of the free technical seminars offered by the program each year.

Rating Systems:

These are available to members for residential, commercial and multifamily construction. By the year 2000, the program rated 1,800 homes, 1,400 apartment units, and 10 commercial buildings, with consultation on 85 other projects.

Resources, Products and Services:

Consulting: The staff provides technical and marketing assistance to participating builders, technical analysis of plans, and construction document reviews.

Publications:

Sustainable Building Sourcebook, fact sheets on green building, Green by Design interactive CD, Municipal Guidelines, and monthly newsletter.

Publicity:

Marketing support for members, directory of Green Building professionals, and co-sponsorship of the Cool House Tour showcasing green buildings in Austin.

Education:

Conferences and monthly training seminars on various Green building aspects, resource library with presentations available for interested groups.

Program Example: Overview of the Commercial Program (including non-financial incentives):
The City of Austin's Commercial Green Building Program assists owners and designers to develop sustainable business practices in the construction and operation of commercial facilities. "Sustainable Business Practices" offer economic benefits to your company and the community without adversely impacting the natural environment or the supply of natural resources.

A building incorporating sustainable building practices provides many lasting benefits by:

- Providing a healthy workplace for occupants;
- Minimizing adverse impacts on the local and global environment;
- Reducing waste during construction and operation of the building;
- Optimizing resource efficiency.

The rewards for a sustainable building positively affect the bottom line by:

- Increasing worker productivity;
- Lowering operating costs;
- Marketing appeal;
- Receiving recognition from the community.
- City of Austin Smart Growth Matrix credit.

Services:

The Commercial Green Building Program provides resources and technical assistance to help the Design Team incorporate sustainable concepts into the design and construction of your building. Our representatives can provide guidance on sustainable issues to consider, information on sustainable products, successful case studies, and design review assistance. The Sustainable Design Checklist and Commercial Rating Tool is a guide for you and your Design Team to use throughout the design and construction process. It outlines at each stage of the design process the sustainable issues that should be considered.

Funding:

The program provides information on Austin Energy and Municipal funding programs and helps to coordinate rebates for commercial construction.

Legislative Initiatives:

The program has worked with city departments and industry associations to develop Municipal Guidelines for green buildings that are mandatory for all new city construction. The guidelines can also be used voluntarily in private sector construction. Most incentives target energy and water, with a strong emphasis on smart growth goals.